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Tuesday, March 5, 2019 metro.us | t: MetroPhilly | f: MetroPhilly

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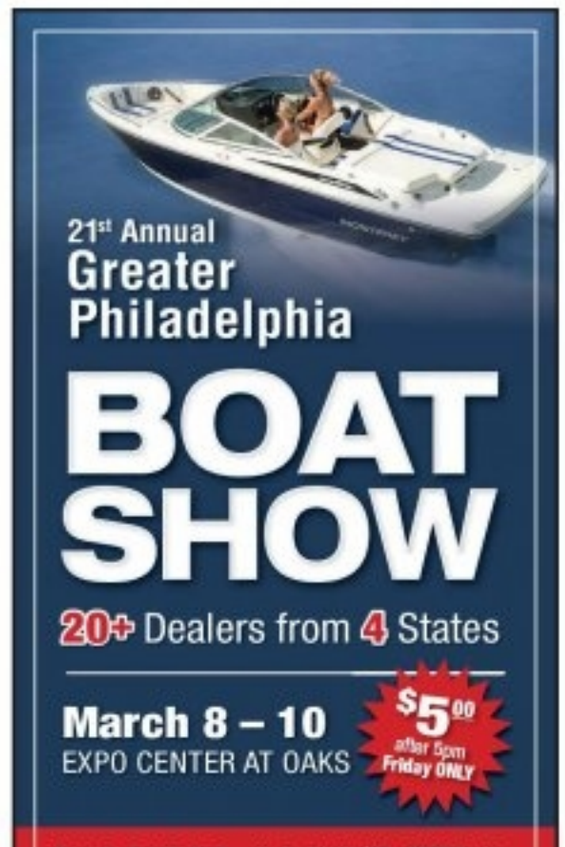
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5 THINGS TO KNOW

WELCOME TO METRO PHILLY

SAM NEWHOUSE, REPORTER

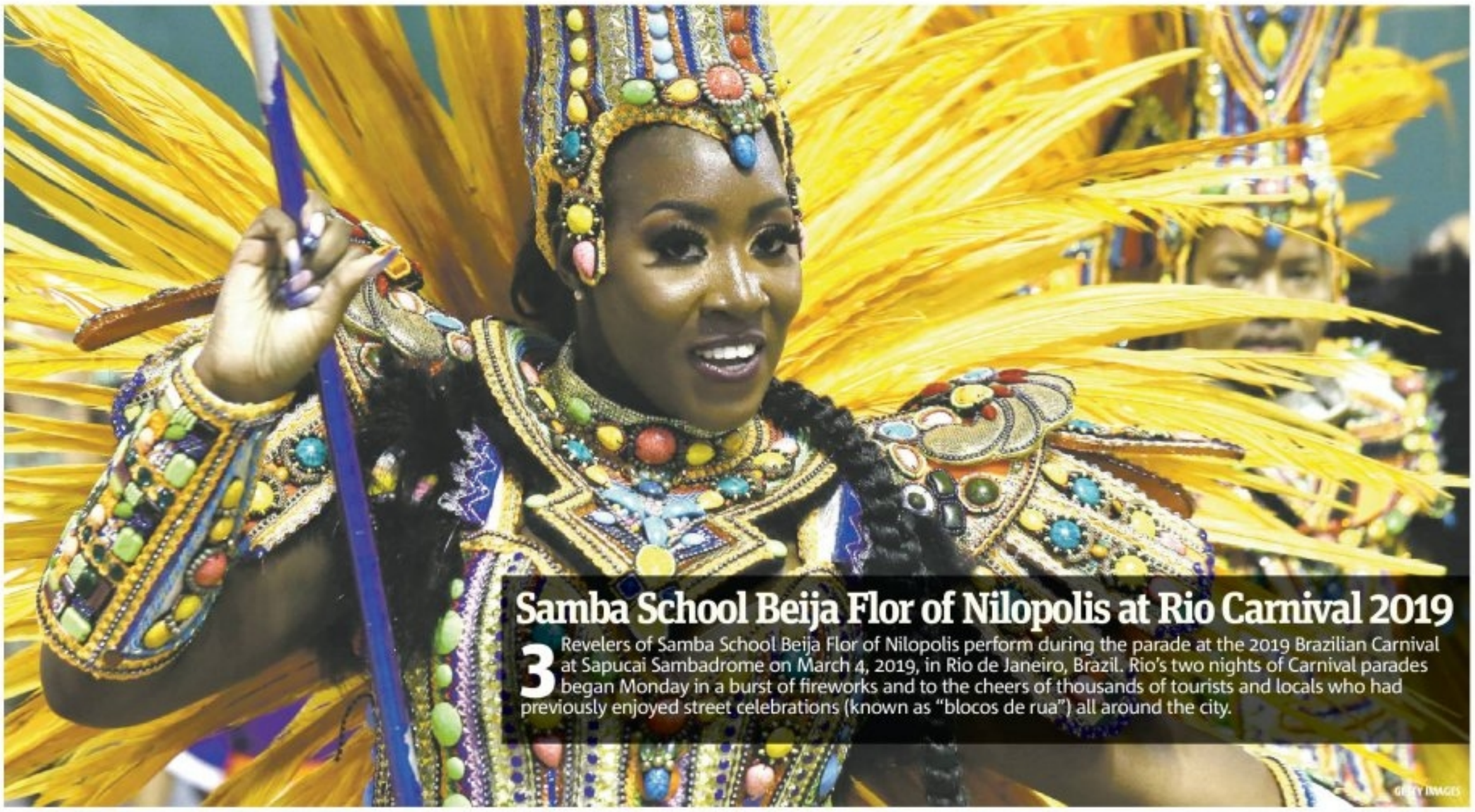
The North Philadelphia station is in what could be called a nerve center of Philadelphia — where Amtrak and Regional Rail lines converge with the Broad Street Line, offering travelers a quick transit option to almost any other part of the city. But it's also in one of the city's most underfunded and blighted areas, surrounded by empty brick warehouses from Philly's past. Now a group of New York developers have teamed up with Amtrak to propose a $162 million residential-retail development at the station. But will it work for the community? Read all about it inside.

1 House Dems target Trump–Putin talks, obstruction

Democrats in Congress unleashed a slew of demands in their investigations of President Donald Trump on Monday, seeking information about his communications with Russian President Vladimir Putin and documents from 81 sources in an obstruction probe. The chairmen of the House Intelligence, Foreign Affairs and Oversight committees wrote to the White House and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo seeking documents and interviews with personnel about Trump's conversations with Putin. "These allegations, if true, raise profound national security, counterintelligence, and foreign policy concerns, especially in light of Russia's ongoing active measures campaign to improperly influence American elections," Chairmen Adam Schiff, Elliot Engel and Elijah Cummings wrote in their letter.

2 Whitaker, former acting AG, leaves Justice Dept

Matthew Whitaker, whose brief tenure as acting U.S. attorney general was marred by accusations that he might try to interfere in a probe of President Donald Trump's campaign, left his Justice Department job over the weekend, a department spokeswoman confirmed on Monday. Whitaker's last day at the department was on Saturday, the rep said, adding she did not know where he might be headed next. In mid-February, AG William Barr was sworn in and Whitaker stepped down from the top post to become a senior counselor in the office of the associate attorney general. In one of his final acts as acting attorney general, Whitaker testified before the House Judiciary Committee where combative Democratic lawmakers pressed him on whether he had tried to interfere with Special Counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation.



3 Samba School Beija Flor of Nilopolis at Rio Carnival 2019

Revelers of Samba School Beija Flor of Nilopolis perform during the parade at the 2019 Brazilian Carnival at Sapucai Sambadrome on March 4, 2019, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Rio's two nights of Carnival parades began Monday in a burst of fireworks and to the cheers of thousands of tourists and locals who had previously enjoyed street celebrations (known as "blocos de rua") all around the city.

GETTY IMAGES

4 East Coast digs out from snow, braces for bitter cold

New England dug out from more than a foot of snow on Monday that snarled commutes and canceled flights, although New York City was spared the worst of the late-winter storm, which was expected to be followed by bitter cold. A band of winter weather stretching from Maryland to Maine dumped 15 inches of snow overnight on downtown Boston and some 5 inches on Central Park in the heart of New York City, National Weather Service reported. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio took the rare step of shutting the city's massive public school system, and New Jersey Transit canceled about a dozen trains on its sprawling commuter system. The mayor defended the school closures on Twitter after snow totals in New York were less than expected and parents griped on social media that there was no reason to keep their kids home.

5 Prodigy frontman Flint, of 'Firestarter' fame, dies at 49

Keith Flint, the Prodigy lead singer who captured the hedonistic spirit of 1990s British rave culture, has died aged 49 in what the band's founder described as a suicide. Flint was one of the best-known faces of British electronic music, performing apparently random dance moves often with eccentric haircuts, sometimes styled as devil's horns, and heavy makeup around his eyes. "I'm a firestarter, twisted firestarter," Flint sang in the 1996 hit which introduced the blistering sounds of Britain's underground rave generation to the mainstream. "I'm the self-inflicted, mind detonator, yeah." Liam Howlett, founder of the group, said Flint had taken his own life. "Our brother Keith took his own life over the weekend. I'm shell shocked, f–kin' angry, confused and heart broken," Howlett said on Instagram. "R.I.P brother."

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NEWS

Could $162M development reawaken 'sleeping giant' of North Philly?

Even with transit upgrades and new residential and commercial facilities, community concerns persist.

SAM NEWHOUSE
sam.newhouse@metro.us

North Philadelphia station is something city dwellers are pretty much accustomed to, but for guests traveling to our fair city, it can be a culture shock.

Alongside the Regional Rail line towers a dilapidated giant brick warehouse known as the Ink Factory building. In the parking lot, you might see from your train a fresh pile of dumped tires. Need to transfer from the Regional Rail to Amtrak? Just traverse a secret overgrown footpath littered with broken glass and decaying scraps of wood.

And yet, a group of New York developers want to invest $162 million into the site. A proposal put forward by North District LLC — a group consisting of financiers from HFZ Capital and Arete Group, with minority shares held by Merchant Equity Group and Amtrak — want to bring new residential and retail developments to the station, clean up the train tracks, and possibly even revitalize the Ink Factory. The group's proposal is scheduled to go before Philadelphia's Civic Design Review board on March 5.

"It's a really important location in Philadelphia, it always was," said Drexel University design professor Harris Steinberg after reviewing the project's latest planning documents. "For better or worse, what people see of Philadelphia when they come through on the train is the post-industrial landscape of North Philadelphia. This is an opportunity to put a new front door on that experience."

About 100 community members were hoping to hear from the developers about the project at a community meeting on Feb. 28 at the Philadelphia Ahmadiyya Society's new Baitul Afaiyat mosque at Broad and Glenwood. But just as the presentation was getting underway, a power outage struck, and the whole meeting had to be canceled, said Rafiyq Friend, the mosque's internal affairs secretary.

The meeting will be rescheduled soon, but based on preliminary conversations, residents already seem concerned about what impact the project will have on their lives, Friend said.

"They're really anxious about it all, want to know what's going on and who's gonna benefit. That's the mood I got in the room," Friend said. "It was the standard questions. ... Will there be any minority contractors? Will there be any minority businesses? How much reinvestment in the community? Those questions were all out there. We don't want to just put buildings in North Philadelphia. The area is demographically the most impoverished in the city."

According to one recent study, North Philadelphia had a poverty rate

The blighted area around North Philadelphia station (pictured) is targeted for a potential $162 million development, which could include new apartments.

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of about 45 percent and the area is badly in need of investment in many forms. A project like this one could help catalyze more investment, Steinberg, the Drexel design professor, remarked. The new mosque just opened in October. Joe Frazier's Gym around the corner may be occupied by a furniture store for now, but it's on the National Register of Historic Places and remains a local landmark.

"For better or worse, what people see of Philadelphia when they come through on the train is the post-industrial landscape of North Philadelphia. This is an opportunity to put a new front door on that experience."

Harris Steinberg, Drexel University design professor

"We look forward to working on this project with developers and community stakeholders who are interested in working with neighbors to come up with something that accommodates the community at large," City Councilwoman Cindy Bass, whose 8th District encompasses the project, said via email of the project. "My office supports things that the community wants in the neighborhood. I always tell communities that they don't have to have anything they don't want in their neighborhoods. Any questions or concerns my office has will be based around the questions or concerns raised by community members."

North District LLC's proposal calls for redevelopment of North Philadelphia station, formerly known as the Germantown Junction, which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1999. (A SEPTA spokeswoman said they would "support any project that brings more riders to our system.")

The station and its area would get new green space, a reopened pedestrian tunnel linking the Regional Rail and Amtrak stations to the Broad Street Line, a repurposed Ink Factory with "maker spaces," co-working, a rooftop deck and market hall inside, and the main attraction: a 300-foot-wide, 6-story residential building with ground-floor retail, just north of the station at Broad and Indiana, according to a project summary submitted to the city.

The project got a thumbs-up in a January 2018 report by the Urban Land Institute on behalf of Philly city planners, which found it has "great potential" as long as it maintains strong community engagement.

For more, go to metro.us.

SAM NEWHOUSE

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GETTY IMAGES

Alabama tornadoes kill 23, including 3 children; like 'giant knife'

Officials warn that the death toll could increase.

Alabama residents and rescue workers on Monday dug through the remnants of homes destroyed by a spate of tornadoes that killed at least 23 people, including at least three children, the deadliest U.S. twisters since 2013.

The tornadoes ripped through Lee County on Sunday with winds of up to 170 miles per hour at Step 4 of the six-step Enhanced Fujita scale, which meteorologists use to measure tornado strength. Earlier estimates had put winds at 150 mph.

At least two tornadoes struck an area of eastern Alabama near the Georgia border in the space of a few hours on Sunday afternoon, with some of the worst damage in the tiny community of Beauregard, according to the National Weather Service.

"It looks almost as if someone took a giant knife and just scraped the ground."
Sheriff Jay Jones

Mobile homes were tossed on their sides and ripped open, their contents strewn on the ground, live television images showed. Pieces of homes hung from trees that were not flattened by the storm.

More than 50 people were reported injured, authorities said, making the tornadoes the deadliest since the one that tore through Moore, Oklahoma, in 2013, killing 24 people.

"It looks almost as if someone took a giant knife and just scraped the ground. There are slabs where homes formerly stood, debris everywhere, trees are snapped," Lee County Sheriff Jay Jones told a morning news conference.

Three of the dead were children, ages 6, 9 and 10, County Coroner Bill Harris told an afternoon news conference. Family members identified two of the young victims.

A morning search of the area found no additional bodies, which officials had feared likely.

"We have not recovered any further victims from the areas that we have initially searched but I want to add a caveat to that, that we have not completed our searches," Jones told the afternoon briefing.

All but six of the victims were identified and investigators think they know the identities of the others, Harris said.

Jenifer Vernon, a 40-year-old grocery store attendant, surveyed the wreckage of her flattened home, spread in piles on either side of her Beauregard street.

"That's half my home," said Vernon, pointing to the debris. "That's the other half." She was in the nearby town of Opelika with her husband and 14-year-old daughter when the tornadoes hit.

Looking over splintered pieces of wood and the remains of kitchen appliances, Vernon said she had lost another home to fire last year, adding, "We'll bounce back from this."

President Donald Trump said on Twitter on Monday that the Federal Emergency Management Agency would be helping.

"FEMA has been told directly by me to give the A Plus treatment to the Great State of Alabama and the wonderful people who have been so devastated by the Tornadoes," Trump said.

The death toll was more than double the 10 people killed by tornadoes in the United States for all of 2018, according to government data. REUTERS

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More Americans see Democrats as 'mainstream' on climate, health care

More Americans find the Democratic Party's positions on big issues like climate change, health care and immigration to be "in the mainstream" than Republican stances on those issues, a new WSJ/NBC News poll has found.

On climate change, a majority of Americans — 56 percent — said Democrats' views are in the mainstream. Only 29 percent said that Republicans' positions on climate are in the mainstream, and 63 percent said they are "out of the mainstream."

The results were similar on health care: 56 percent of respondents said Democrats' positions are in the mainstream (with 38 percent saying no). Forty-one percent said Republicans are in the mainstream, with 52 percent saying they are out of the mainstream.

The Democrats have a seven-point advantage on immigration. Forty-five percent of Americans said the GOP's policies on immigration are in the mainstream; 50 percent said they're outside it. Meanwhile, 52 percent of Americans said Democrats' positions are in the mainstream, while 42 percent disagreed.

On abortion rights, a perennially hot election-year topic, the Republican Party also lagged behind. Fifty-one percent of Americans said Democrats' positions on abortion are mainstream. Only 38 percent said the GOP's stances on the issue are mainstream.

The poll found that Americans are almost equally split on whose fiscal policy is more mainstream: 47 percent said the Republicans are in the mainstream; 47 percent said they're outside it. American's views of the opposite side of the aisle are nearly identical: 46 percent said Democrats are in the mainstream on fiscal policy; 47 percent said they're not.

The same poll had mixed news for President Trump. It put his approval rating at 46 percent, with 52 percent disapproval.

In terms of the 2020 presidential election, 41 percent of respondents said they would vote for Trump's re-election, while 48 percent said they would vote for a generic Democratic candidate. That's a five-point improvement for Trump since mid-December.

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Luke Perry. ALL GETTY IMAGES

'90s Heartthrob, 'Beverly Hills, 90210' star Luke Perry dead at 52 after stroke

Perry was best known for his role as loner Dylan McKay in "90210."

Actor Luke Perry, who rose to superstardom on the teen-oriented 1990s television drama "Beverly Hills, 90210" and then aged into a fatherly role on comic-based "Riverdale," died on Monday at the age of 52 after suffering a "massive" stroke last week, his publicist said.

Publicist Arnold Robinson said Perry died in a Los Angeles-area hospital surrounded by his family and close friends, including his former wife Minnie Sharp, his two children, and his fiancée Wendy Madison Bauer.

"The family appreciates the outpouring of support and prayers that have been extended to Luke from around the world, and respectfully request privacy in this time of great mourning. No further details will be released at this time," Robinson said in a statement.

Perry was rushed to a Los Angeles hospital on Wednesday after suffering the stroke at his home, celebrity website TMZ.com reported last week. TMZ said on Monday that Perry never recovered consciousness.

Perry took ill the same day that Fox television announced it was reviving the "Beverly Hills, 90210" series with many of the original cast, including Jason Priestley, Jennie Garth and Tori Spelling. Perry was not among those announced as returning for the limited run of six new episodes this summer.

Since 2016, Perry had played Fred Andrews, father of Archie Andrews, in the television series "Riverdale," a dark twist on the Archie comic books, but more than 20 years earlier the actor had been a heartthrob who adorned the cover of scores of magazines aimed at adolescent girls, thanks to "Beverly Hills, 90210."

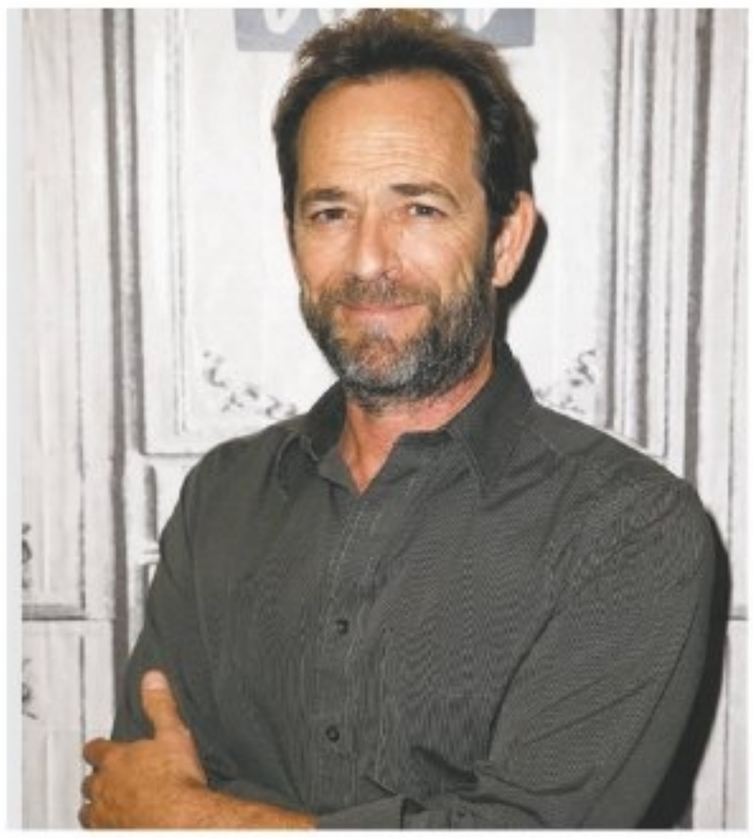
The show, which aired on the Fox network, was about a group of attractive high school students living the sweet life amid Southern California affluence while dealing with teen angst, as well as a raft of more serious issues such as date rape, AIDS and teen pregnancy.

Perry was in his mid-20s when he started playing high schooler Dylan McKay, a brooding loner on a motorcycle with prominent sideburns and bad-boy tendencies. An avalanche of comparisons to the late James Dean soon followed.

"Beverly Hills, 90210" got off to a slow start in the ratings in 1990 but built a cult following that grew to become a cultural phenomenon with its target demographic. One of the key plot lines was Perry's character developing a romance with Brenda, a wholesome Midwestern transplant to Beverly Hills, played by Shannen Doherty, before moving on to her best friend, Kelly, played by Garth.

Along the way Perry, Doherty, Garth and co-stars Priestley, Spelling and Ian Ziering became stars.

Perry's fame was such that he was getting 4,000 fan letters a week and drawing crowds of thousands of teenage girls to his personal appearances. Once Perry had to be smuggled out of a Seattle mall hiding in a laundry hamper because of over-zealous fans. At another appearance, some 20 people were injured rushing a stage.



He eventually gave up the personal appearances for security concerns and did not like being considered a "teen idol."

"My problem with that is it's inaccurate for two reasons," he said at a news conference in 1992. "One, I'm not a teenager. Two, I don't think anyone idolizes anybody."

Perry left "90210" after its sixth season but returned two years later as the show finished its 10-year run. By the time it was over, Perry's Dylan had endured a drinking problem, cocaine and heroin abuse, financial hardship, a near-fatal car crash, his father's faked death, various romances and a marriage that ended when his wife was mistakenly killed by a hitman hired by her mobster father.

Perry also was in the 1992 movie "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" that preceded the TV series of that name and during his "90210" run portrayed real-life rodeo star Lane Frost in "8 Seconds." He learned to ride bulls and did many of his own stunts in the film.

Perry's other TV credits included "Windfall," a 2006 series about a group of friends who win a big lottery jackpot; two seasons of "Jeremiah," a post-apocalyptic drama; and a season on "Oz," a prison drama on which he played a preacher convicted of embezzlement.

His stage work included starring in the London stage adaptation of "When Harry Met Sally" in 2004 and playing Brad in "The Rocky Horror Show" on Broadway in 2001.

Perry grew up in Fredericktown, Ohio (population 2,300), and after graduating from high school headed to Los Angeles to pursue acting while working construction jobs and in a doorknob factory. In the late 1980s, he took on soap opera roles and television commercials in New York before landing the "Beverly Hills, 90210" part.

Perry and Minnie Sharp, who were married from 1992 to 2003, had two children. REUTERS

TWEETS

@DannyTrejo
My heart goes out to Luke Perry's family, he was a really good guy. I'll miss seeing you around, buddy.

@MollyRingwald
My heart is broken. I will miss you so much Luke Perry. Sending all my love to your family. : #LukePerry

@IanZiering
Dearest Luke,
I will forever bask in the loving memories we've shared over the last thirty years. May your journey forward be enriched by the magnificent souls who have passed before you, just like you have done here, for those you leave behind.

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LUKE PERRY
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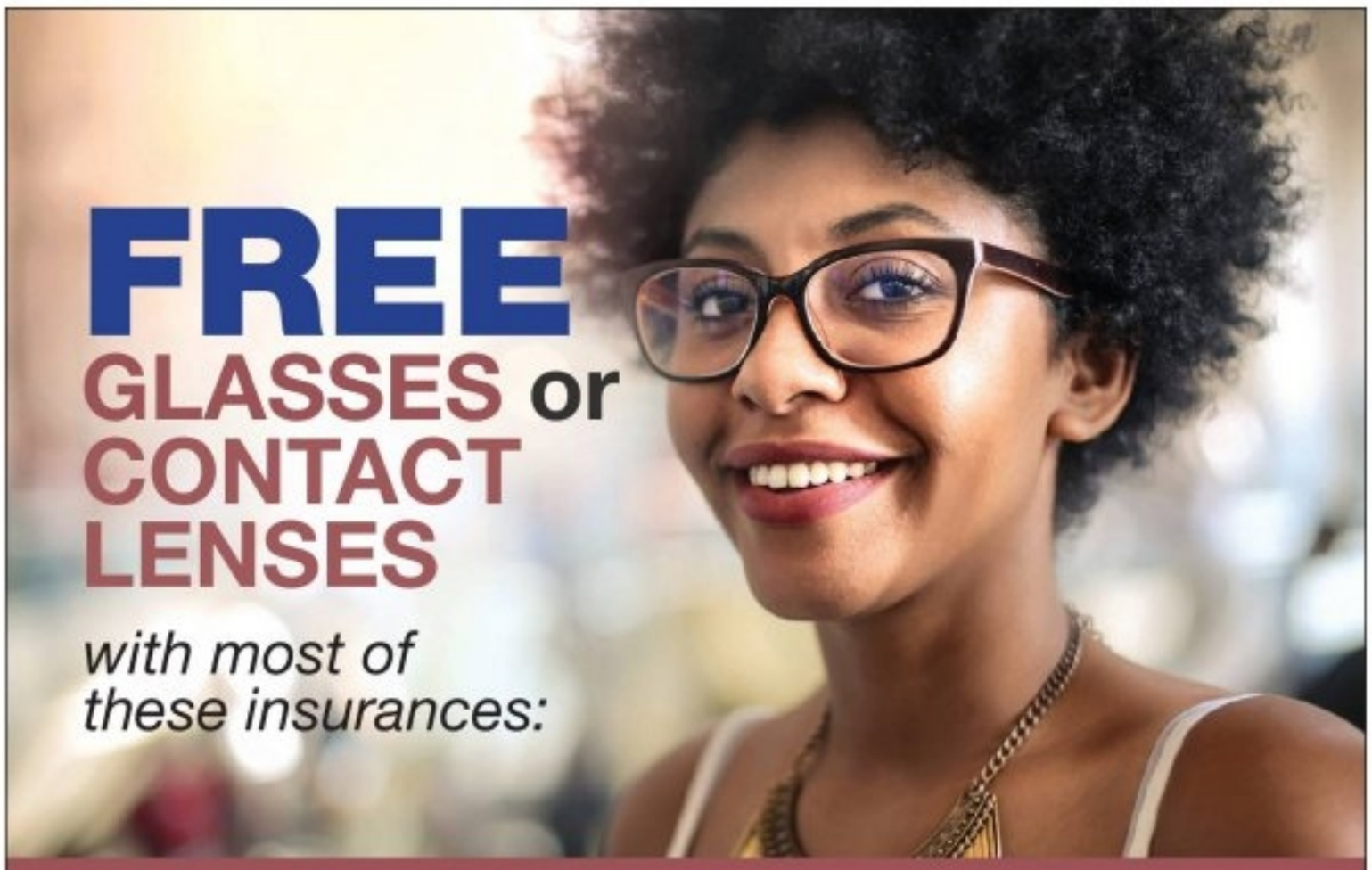
FOREVER



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Will Cheyney University lose its accreditation?

The future of the oldest HBCU in the nation is in flux due to financial woes.

MICHAEL BUTLER
letters@metro.us

Cheyney University is the oldest historically black college or university (HBCU) in the nation and will find out by year's end if it will continue to have accreditation or not.

Cheyney has faced a 67 percent drop in enrollment since 2007 and been hampered by a lack of financial resources. In November, regional accreditation body the Middle States Association will decide if the college will remain an accredited institution, according to WHYY.

Cheyney is close in proximity to Philadelphia, with its campus sprawling across 275 acres of Delaware and Chester counties.

Ken Marshall, spokesman for the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, said the system is steadfast in supporting Cheyney. "We're going to continue to work with Cheyney in every way we can to support their efforts on behalf of students so that the university can continue either as an accredited institution or in some other form," Marshall said.

The PSSHE, a system to which Cheyney belongs, will erase $30 million of the $43 million the school owes if it can meet standards like keeping a balanced school budget.

In order to maintain a balanced budget, Cheyney has to raise $4 million by June, a key part of the process to help the HBCU keep its accreditation.

If Cheyney does not meet the appropriate standards, PSSHE Chancellor Daniel Greenstein has suggested that Cheyney could close, offer non-degree certificate programs or become part of another university.

University officials will submit a report in August to the PSSHE, who will evaluate

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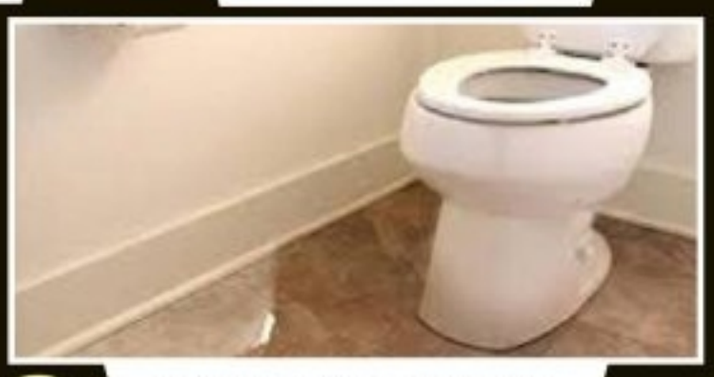

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Cheyney's progress before making a November decision that the school can appeal if necessary.

In another part of the country, North Carolina's all-women HBCU Bennett College has also made headlines recently for its financial struggles and being in danger of losing its accreditation. Bennett College is one of only two HBCUs exclusively for women, making its need to stay open that much more important for women looking to attend college there.

St. Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Virginia, was the last HBCU to close, in 2013, after a long struggle with financial woes and losing its accreditation.

"We're going to continue to work with Cheyney in every way we can to support their efforts on behalf of students so that the university can continue."

Ken Marshall, spokesman for the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education

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Pat King
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READER WRITE-INS:

OVERSHARING ON INSTAGRAM

Does everything you do really need to be documented? I have so many friends who take a bajillion Instagram stories every single day of the most unimportant things you could think of. Here's a video of making coffee in the morning. Here's another shaky video of that same person walking down the sidewalk on their way to work. Who cares?!?!

If you post every single part of your daily life, how do you expect anyone to care? Instagram is fun when you choose your posts wisely. No one wants to see before and after videos of you eating avocado toast. There are more interesting things to post!

— **Jenny,** *Metro Philly reader*

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metro.us/horoscopes

Aries Don't let excitement lead to a mistake. Sharing too much information with the wrong person will leave you in an awkward position. Keep your plans a secret for now.

Taurus Take on a challenge that involves helping others. What you have to offer will impress someone who can help you use your skills in new and exciting ways. Don't sell yourself short.

Gemini Your priorities should be personal growth and self-improvement, but don't take any shortcuts. Someone will take advantage of your gullibility if you fall for a scam.

Cancer Don't fear change. Look at your options and pick the one that suits you best. Use your imagination and gravitate toward concrete offers that promote greater stability.

Leo Your changing attitude will leave some people wondering what you are going to do next. Look before you leap, and don't make promises unless you are sure you can deliver.

Virgo Spend more time on personal improvements and less time with people who promote doing things that are costly or bad for your health. Discipline will pay off.

Libra If you want change, expect it to cost you. You'll face opposition if you get involved in a joint venture. Compromise will be necessary if you want to be successful.

Scorpio Spend time nurturing important relationships and fixing your surroundings. Go directly to the source to avoid a mishap. Don't hire someone to do something that you can do yourself.

Sagittarius Find your own opportunities. If you try to copy someone or let someone take charge, you will miss out. Do your own thing.

Capricorn Don't get angry or frustrated. Put your energy into making positive domestic and financial changes. Let your intuition guide you.

Aquarius Make changes for the right reasons, not because you're following someone else. How you react to others will affect how much help you receive.

Pisces Consider your options. Stepping forward and letting go of the past will give you the boost you need to make the most of your life and relationships. EUGENIA LAST

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Corella is artistic director of "Giselle." GETTY

Heartbreakingly beautiful

Giselle hits the stage on March 7.

MOLLY GIVEN
Molly.Given@metro.us

The heartbreakingly beautiful story of "Giselle" is hitting the stage this week at the Pennsylvania Ballet. Angel Corella, a former principal dancer with the American Ballet Theatre who played Albrecht in the production years ago, is bringing the show back to life as its artistic director. Corella made the cover of The New York Times for his performance in the wildly popular ballet, and he hopes to bring the same kind of energy to the City of Brotherly Love. Corella chatted with Metro about what to expect at the show, the power of emotion with dancing, and how "Giselle" can teach everyone a lesson about love and life.

Why was "Giselle" chosen for the 2019 season?
I usually choose the season depending on the dancers we have and also the direction, more or less, of where the whole season is going. I think last season it was energetic with a lot of dancing, and this season it was more of a romantic kind of season. We started with "Romeo and Juliet." It felt like a continuation of love stories, and "Giselle" is one of the most heartbreaking stories on the repertoire. So I think that it was the most obvious choice at this time, and the company hasn't done it in quite a long time so I wanted to bring [it] back with my point of view of the story.

Do you try to guide your dancers or let their own interpretation take precedent when dancing?
With "Giselle," I have to be very specific because there is a lot of style and movement that needs to be very clear to be able to tell the story. So, it's not a ballet that you can leave open to interpretation. There's a couple of scenes where the dancers can be more creative and add a little bit more of their creativity, but I think with "Giselle" we have to be more true and accurate to how it was created. It doesn't have as much freedom as other ballets do. But actually, within the same ballet, the energy, look and the approach of doing those steps, it can be very different depending on who does it. That's what's so great about live performances, everyone can look different doing the same thing.

Since "Giselle" is such an emotional show, is it better to let emotion take over while dancing or do you have to be more strict while performing?
Well, the hardest thing with this ballet is you have to be two completely different dancers from Act I to Act II, especially if you're Giselle. In Act I, she's very earthy and very full of life, she's got a beautiful big heart with great energy — she's very alive. The second act is all light and airy with the movements. There's still a lot of passion in her spirit but all the movements and all the dancing has to look completely ethereal. We have to go from a point of technical ability and technical strength to the dancer going onstage and forgetting about it all and getting into the role. I do focus a lot in the rehearsal on the technical part, but then, after all of that is under control, we start to let it go and start to get into what is really important to tell the story.

The story follows a woman who has her heart broken by a powerful man and then forgives him. What do you think makes this story so timeless, especially in today's world?
I think that's the surface of the story, but there's something much deeper than that. There is a lesson to be learned from her [Giselle] point of view and from his [Albrecht] point of view. In the end, he's left loveless and with a life that he's not happy with. And although she has died, she has filled her life with a positive and very pure soul. So I think there is a great lesson to be learned. He promised something to her that couldn't be fulfilled and we feel sorry for her, but in the end, we should feel sorry for him. He's left alone and completely destroyed and she teaches him about the purity of love and how important it is. So I think the power is on her side more than his side, ultimately.

Overall, what can the people of Philadelphia expect from the production?
They can expect one of the most endearing and most important ballets of the classical repertoire. It's beautiful dancing, but also a wonderful love story with a supernatural element. It's a beautiful and romantic story about love and betrayal. It's a story with a lesson to be learned about love and living your life to the fullest, and not waiting until its too late. It's funny that most full-length ballets are about being loved and betrayed by a man, so let's just hope that someone will create a ballet the other way around one day.

"Giselle" runs from March 7-17. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit paballet.org.

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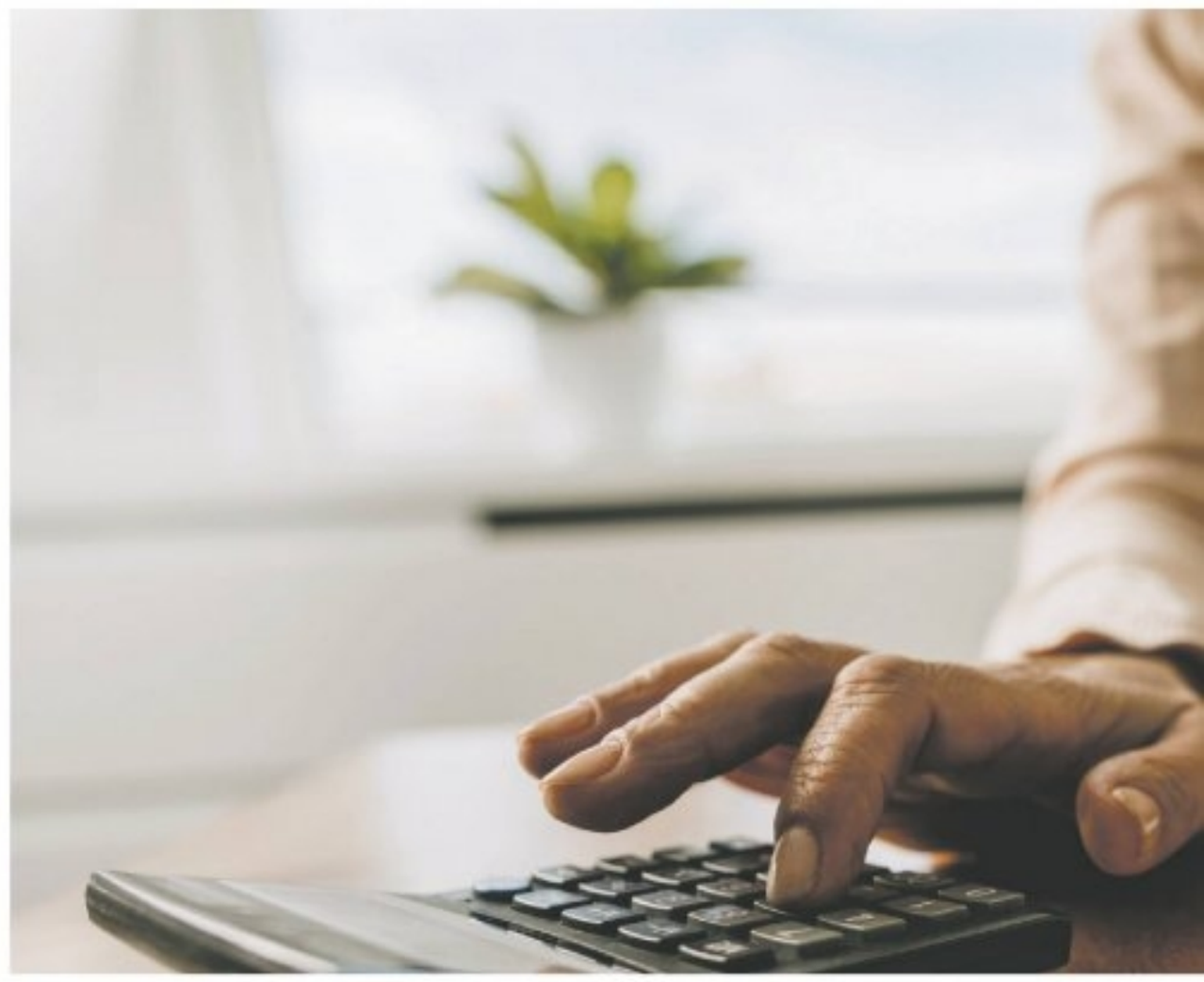

5 Tips for cutting the cost of having your taxes done

NerdWallet is a personal finance website.

Many taxpayers stress about the size of their tax bills this time of year, but many more may be stressing about the size of the bill to calculate their tax bills. It now costs $188, on average, to have a tax preparer do a Form 1040, according to the National Society of Accountants. Itemize and add a state return, and the average rises to $294.

For many people, the struggle to find affordable, high-quality tax preparers is real, but experts say five things can help rein in the cost.

1. See if you can get free help

The IRS programs Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) provide free tax-prep services generally to people who make $54,000 or less, have disabilities, are older than 60 or speak limited English. This can be a huge money-saver if you qualify. To find locations in your area, go to irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep.

2. Shop around (but thoughtfully)

Comparison shopping for tax preparers can save money, but it can be tricky, too. Not all tax preparers charge by the form — some charge by the hour and some charge per return, says Christine Freeland, president of the National Society of Accountants.

"You're going to pay also by the level of experience and background that somebody has," she says.

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It's OK to ask a preparer for an upfront estimate, says Melissa Labant, director of tax policy and advocacy for the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

And if the final bill is significantly higher than what you were quoted, ask why. "It may be that your return was more complicated than they anticipated, but if they don't have a reason for why your return ended up being twice as much as what they had quoted you, that would be a red flag to me," she says.

3. Read the contract

"Typically, tax preparers that want a long-term relationship with you will have some type of an engagement letter," Labant says. That will help you understand how the preparer's fees work, and it may give you a heads-up on whether there will be charges for things such as extra copies of your return.

Preparers can't base their fees on a percentage of your tax refund amount, Freeland says, and they can't charge you a separate fee for having the IRS direct-deposit your refund.

4. Ask for a break if you need it

Negotiating tax-prep fees isn't very common, but sometimes it's OK to ask for a discount, Freeland says.

"If you're having a bad year and you've been with somebody for a long time and something's happened, somebody's lost a job, you've lost a spouse, you've had something that's out of the ordinary, I think there's nothing wrong with calling your preparer and saying, 'Look, this is the bind I'm in this year. Is there anything you can do for me?'" she says.

5. Start early, get organized

Tax preparers often charge more as the April filing deadline nears, so the earlier you get your documents to them, the more you could save. Many preparers draw a line in the sand somewhere around the last week of March, Freeland says. After that, fees often start rising.

Furthermore, even though the complexity of the return and the quantity of records heavily influence the cost of human tax preparation, so does your level of organization, Labant says.

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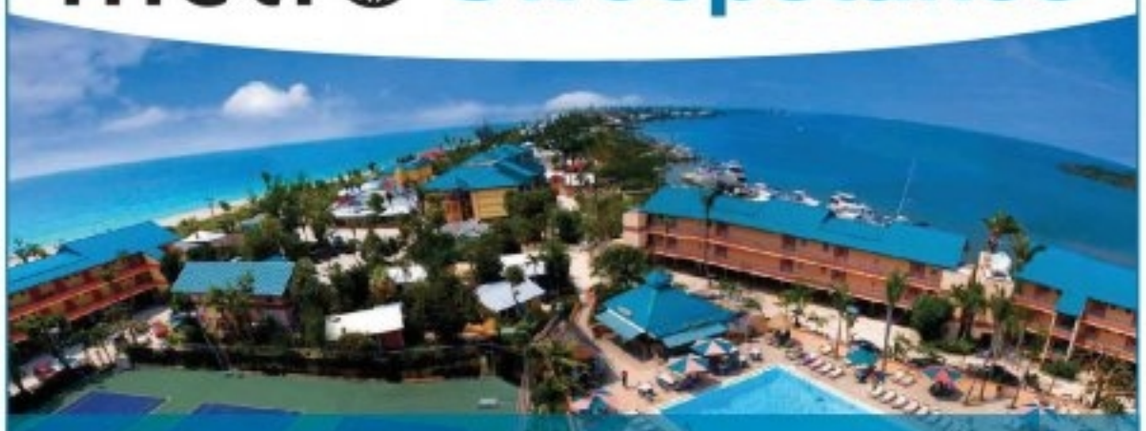

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The modern world of *failed* male flirting

The informality of the digital world has completely changed the rules.

LUZ LANCHEROS, MWN
letters@metro.us

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Being a woman who uses dating apps is the same as being a rabbit on hunting day. It's possible that men will shoot you, or that you will be able to simply run away and hide. Yes, in the middle of "Hello, how are you, what are you doing?" it is possible to find someone to go out with — but you could also receive photographs of penises without any reason. If you ignore messages from a person or simply say "no," you could be called "fat" or "ugly." How did the rules of the game change, and how did the internet become a catalog of unrequested intimate photographs or worse?

That was, perhaps, what Alexandra Tweeten, creator of Bye Felipe (name derived from "Bye, Felicia" a phrase from a scene in the American 1995 comedy film "Friday," meaning "get out of your face") in 2014, asked herself when she realized she wasn't the only woman who was being violated by rejected men on Tinder, Match and other platforms. Her Instagram, which now has more than 400,000 followers, features all types of online harassment, from those who ask "show me your vagina" (with hilarious responses) to those who insist several times until violently exploding or those who judge the physical appearance of women. The success of the page has been maintained by the thousands who share their experiences daily, revealing the incompetence some men have when flirting.

A study by Match.com in 2014, the year Bye Felipe was created, showed 45 percent of women received these types of messages and that they did feel offended. Another study conducted two years later and dubbed "2016 Singles in America Survey" revealed that this number had increased. Two years ago, a Reddit user asked, "Why do men continue with that?" There were several responses. Some claimed that they wanted to receive something in return after showing penises. Others stated they hoped to find open-minded women who would magically have sex with them. Or simply to raise self-esteem.

"[Heterosexual] cisgender men have been taught very aggressive techniques of approaching women without asking what do they want or not. You cannot appear charming to someone if you do not take into account their desires or dehumanize them," Catalina Ruiz-Navarro, editor at Volcánica magazine and a columnist for Vice and Univisión, explained to Metro.

Ruiz-Navarro, who is a co-creator of the #MiPrimerAcoso (My first harassment) initiative, also analyzed these methods of flirting.

"Women are violated at all times, but men have been taught that if they insist and insist, sooner or later women will say yes. So, it becomes something like winning a prize. Human desire does not work this way. I believe that men are rejected because they believe that we are a kind of award that, if they insist enough, they will win. And that is totally dehumanizing. These men are not interested in us as people, but as an objective, as if we were cars, things... Obviously it is not about all men," she explained.

Ruiz-Navarro added: "These behaviors can change, as women express their dissatisfaction. In the history of humanity, courtship rituals have evolved. There is nothing that can suggest these things will remain static from now on."

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SPORTS

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FOR GABE KAPLER, PRESSURE IS ON TO DO THE SIMPLEST JOB

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In some respects, Philadelphia Phillies manager Gabe Kapler's job grew simpler this offseason. Nothing's easier than writing four new star players into the daily lineup, sitting back with a pack of sunflower seeds and watching the brilliance unfold.

But all that talent comes with a price. For owner John Middleton, adding Bryce Harper, J.T. Realmuto, Jean Segura and Andrew McCutchen (who've appeared in 14 MLB All-Star games among them), the bottom line adds up to about $450 million.

For Kapler, the price is pressure. Lots of it.

The Phillies are expected to win in 2019. The quarter-million fans who've bought tickets to Citizens Bank Park since Thursday will demand victories in return for their investment. So will the thousands more who made Harper's No. 3 jersey the fastest-selling launch in sports apparel history.

If the star-studded lineup doesn't produce — quickly — Kapler will surely be the first target of fans' ire. In an interview with the WIP Morning Show last week, the second-year manager agreed with that assessment and said, "I embrace the pressure."

Give Kapler credit. He won't duck and hide. But, to succeed, he's going to have to be a vastly different field general than he was in his rookie season.

In fairness, Kapler's current job is not exactly what Phils ownership hired him for last year. He was brought in as a young, innovative manager to guide a team of prospects — and a few suspects. His role was to teach kids like Scott Kingery, Rhys Hoskins, Jorge Alfaro and Nick Williams how to be everyday Major Leaguers. Some succeeded. Others, well . . .

Hoping to squeeze wins out of that team in 2018, Kapler overmanaged it. Under the auspice of analytics, he flipped the lineup on a daily basis, yanked players too early for defensive replacements and implemented curious defensive shifts. That doesn't even address his handling of the pitching staff — like hooking Aaron Nola way too early several times.

Hey, Kapler was a rookie. And just like the players, the guys who coach the teams can vastly improve their second year. Just ask Philadelphia Eagles head coach Doug Pederson.

Of course, Kapler's not about to morph into Charlie Manuel. Speaking of which, I posted an admittedly unfair Twitter poll Sunday asking fans whom they'd trust more to manage the 2019 Phils, Kapler or Manuel. Nearly 7,000 votes later, 78 percent opted for Uncle Charlie.

That result says two things. One, fans may be on to something in preferring an old-school manager like Manuel, who knew when to sit back and let the lads play.

With the starting eight Kapler can field this year, there's no need for overthinking it. Personally, I'd go with a batting order of McCutchen, Segura, Harper, Hoskins, Realmuto, Odubel Herrera, Maikel Franco and Cesar Hernandez.

With that lineup, there's no basis to panic into trying to protect a lead in the sixth inning. There's no cause for a manager to put his fingerprints on every game.

Secondly, that vote affirms to me that Kapler is the one person being eyed by every potential angry caller to WIP. He's been handed a Rotisserie manager's dream. And he's the guy who doesn't get the benefit of a honeymoon with the fans.

My advice to Kapler is to buy one of those satin team jackets (like Jim Fregosi wore) to keep him warm in the dugout during those cold April games. Write out a beautiful lineup card, and then enjoy the good times with the rest of us.

Let the game come to you, skip. Your team is going to win most of them.

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Harper at top of 2019 NL MVP, home run king odds

Bryce is the favorite to win National League Most Valuable Player.

MATT BURKE

Matt Burke is a veteran sports journalist and the Founder and Editorial Director of MetroBet.

ISTOCK

There are early odds available for 2019 National League MVP and NL home run champ prop bets at many sportsbooks right now, and newly signed Phillie Bryce Harper is at or near the top of both lists.

Here are the average National League MVP odds based on sportsbooks currently offering the wager.

NL MVP
Bryce Harper +600
Nolan Arenado +650
Kris Bryant +1000
Paul Goldschmidt +1000
Christian Yelich +1500
Manny Machado +1500
Eugenio Suarez +1500

And here are the MLB home run champ odds.

MLB home runs
Giancarlo Stanton +450
Aaron Judge +450
Mike Trout +550
Khris Davis +600
JD Martinez +700
Joey Gallo +850
Bryce Harper +900

If you can get Harper at +600 to win MVP, do it now. Harper is the type that will want to live up to that contract and prove he's worth every penny.

As for home run totals, Harper at +900 is another solid bet. If you can get to around 47 home runs in a season, you're in the conversation these days, as Khris Davis won last year with 48. Harper clocked 34 dingers last season and his career high was 42 in 2015. Citizens Bank Park should tack on an additional six or seven homers for Harper this season.

Also consider that another Scott Boras client that held out until late February last season — JD Martinez — had the finest offensive season of his career last year in his first season in Boston. Martinez belted 43 home runs and finished second behind Davis for the home run crown.

TWEET OF THE DAY

Chris Fallica
@chrisfallica

In the last three years, Villanova has one fewer NCAA Tournament win (13) than the Pac-12 has as an entire conference (14).

Sports betting 101: What are futures?

VSiN

While moneylines, point spreads and totals generally focus on the short term and specific matches, futures are long-term betting odds. They focus on events that will happen further down the line — in the future. In this case, you're betting on things like who will win a division or who will win a championship well in advance.

There are some benefits and some risks associated with betting on futures. If you win, you can earn a hefty payout. On the flip side, however, your money is locked up for a long period of time. During that time, a lot of things can go wrong. If you bet on a particular team to win the championship and one of their star players is injured, suddenly their prospects of winning do not look quite as good. Sometimes, the team may just hit a slump partway through the season and lose a lot of valuable momentum. Just like with all betting, it's important to calculate the risks and possible rewards.

In this kind of bet, the odds are set at the beginning of the season, but they can go up or down as time goes on. Once you make your bet, however, it is locked in at whatever the odds were at the time you placed the bet. This is why making a bet on a long shot early on can bring a potentially substantial payoff. At the beginning of the season, it isn't entirely clear how well the team will do over the season, and so the odds are longer, offering higher rewards. If, over the course of the season, though, a team is showing that they've got a good chance of winning, the odds for them improve, the risk goes down, and the payoff gets smaller. Choosing exactly when to make this sort of bet is important.

ISTOCK

Betting trends

Preview: Orlando @ Philadelphia

TUESDAY, 7 P.M.

30-35	Overall record	40-23
35-29-1	ATS record	30-33-0
29-36	O/U record	32-31
13-19	Away/home	24-9
7-3	L10	6-4
4-0 ATS in L4 following a loss	Betting trend	2-6 ATS in L8 vs. EC
+5.5	Line	-5.5

O/U: Over-under. L10 = Last 10 games. ATS = Against the spread.

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In partnership with VSiN CASINO

Will LeBron and the Lakers miss the playoffs?

Exploring one of the hottest NBA prop bets.

MATT YOUMANS

Matt Youmans is VSiN's Senior Editor. He spent 16 years at the Las Vegas Review-Journal as a sports betting columnist before joining VSiN.

LAS VEGAS — LeBron James' debut in Hollywood is turning into a full-blown debacle. About all he can hope for now are rave reviews of his movie and TV projects, and that's probably a long shot.

The critics are ripping the leading role he's playing with the Lakers. A team the "King" was expected to guide to the playoffs has become a clown show in countless ways. The NBA's version of March Madness is watching how low LeBron and the sub-.500 Lakers can go.

"I find it hard to believe LeBron won't will his way into the playoffs, and I find it hard to believe the NBA doesn't want LeBron in the playoffs," William Hill sportsbook director Nick Bogdanovich said. "But the Lakers have had some really bad losses."

This is how oddsmakers can take soap opera story lines and make prop bets: Will the Lakers make the playoffs?

When the Lakers stumbled into the All-Star break at 28-29, Westgate SuperBook manager Jeff Sherman decided to post the playoff prop. On Feb. 15, Sherman opened the Lakers' price to make the playoffs at "No" -120. Three days later, it was -140.

GETTY IMAGES

The action was fast and furious, with wild adjustments in the price. Two weeks later, Sherman said, more than $100,000 has been wagered on the prop. There are several nickel ($500) and dime ($1,000) bets, plus a $10,000 "Yes" bet on the Lakers.

"This prop got so popular. It's the most popular prop we've done in years," Sherman said. "We have people with tons of opinions on both sides of it. We literally had a guy bet five dimes on 'Yes' and 10 minutes later another guy bet five dimes on the 'No.'"

Erin Rynning, a professional bettor who focuses on the NBA, said he considered putting a major "Yes" wager on the Lakers but opted to limit his play to $1,000 at +115 during the All-Star break.

"I'm not ready to write LeBron off yet, but I'm up against it," Rynning said. "I should have stuck with my initial take of the Lakers putting together such a poor team."

William Hill posted the prop about a week after the Westgate and opened the Lakers' "No" price at -240. The other side was +200.

"The first bet was 'Yes' for $5,000," Bogdanovich said.

How low can LeBron's posse (as Phil Jackson would call it) go? The Lakers are 2-4 since the All-Star break. The fourth loss, 118-109 at Phoenix on Saturday, was a whopper because the Suns have the worst record in the league. The Lakers dropped to 30-33, 4.5 games behind San Antonio (35-29) for the eighth and final playoff spot in the West, with 19 games to go.

William Hill adjusted the prop price on Sunday to "No" -650/"Yes" +450. The Westgate went to "No" -900/"Yes" +600.

Not only gamblers are losing faith in LeBron's Lakers. Snoop Dogg posted a video in which he said he'll sell his Lakers box seats for $5 for the remainder of the season.

"It's [bleeping] terrible watching my Lakers play," Snoop Dogg said. "Somebody got to go … starting with the coach. Get LeBron some [bleeping] help because these goofballs aren't going to do [bleep]."

Sports on TV Highlights

7:00 pm	**NBA Basketball** Orlando Magic vs. Philadelphia 76ers	NBC Sports Philadelphia
7:00 pm	**Men's CBB** Wake Forest Demon Deacons vs. Duke Blue Devils	ESPN
7:00 pm	**Men's CBB** Rhode Island Rams vs. St. Joseph's Hawks	CBS Sports
8:00 pm	**NBA Basketball** Houston Rockets vs. Toronto Raptors	TNT
8:00 pm	**NHL Hockey** Minnesota Wild vs. Nashville Predators	NBC Sports Network
10:30 pm	**NBA Basketball** Boston Celtics vs. Golden State Warriors	TNT

Magic versus Sixers betting preview

The Orlando Magic (30-35) are poised to take advantage of the Joel Embiid-less Philadelphia 76ers (40-23) on Tuesday night, as the Cameroon native is expected to miss his sixth straight game with left knee soreness.

Several trends are working in Orlando's favor heading into their Tuesday trip to the Wells Fargo Center. They're 9-1 against the spread in their last 10 games played on one day of rest, per Covers.com. The Magic have covered in five straight against teams with winning records.

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly against a great home team like Philadelphia, Orlando is 8-3 against the spread in their last 11 road games.

Magic center Nikola Vucevic (20.7 points per game) is the key to this one. He beat Embiid early and often when these clubs last met on Nov. 14, posting 30 points. Without Embiid on the floor, Vucevic could be sitting on a monster effort here.

The Sixers have had trouble "taking out the trash" of late, too, going 2-6 against the spread in their last eight games with teams under the .500 mark.

The play: Magic spread

ROBERT CRISCOLA

VSiN DAILY LINE

NBA

ORLANDO MAGIC VS. PHILADELPHIA 76ERS -5.5

HOUSTON ROCKETS VS. TORONTO RAPTORS -3

BOSTON CELTICS VS. GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS -7.5

MEN'S CBB

WAKE FOREST DEMON DEACONS VS. DUKE BLUE DEVILS -23.5

RHODE ISLAND RAMS VS. ST. JOSEPH'S HAWKS -1

AUBURN TIGERS -3 VS. ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE

NHL

MINNESOTA WILD +195 VS. NASHVILLE PREDATORS -175

FLORIDA PANTHERS +195 VS. PITTSBURGH PENGUINS -175

Report: Nick Foles expected to sign with Jaguars

Foles' new deal cannot become official until March 13.

JOVAN ALFORD
jovan.alford@metro.us

GETTY IMAGES

With a new league year set to kick off in fewer than two weeks, it appears as if we know where former Philadelphia Eagles backup quarterback Nick Foles will be playing next season.

ESPN's Dan Graziano reported on Sunday that the former Super Bowl LVII MVP is expected to sign a multi-year deal next week with the Jacksonville Jaguars.

Furthermore, when the deal becomes official, the Jaguars are expected to release quarterback Blake Bortles, who just signed a three-year, $54 million contract extension last offseason.

Les Bowen of Philly.com also reported on Sunday about Foles joining the Jaguars. This move, along with others that have been made this offseason, cannot become official until the new league year starts on March 13.

Additionally, NFL teams are not allowed to talk contracts with prospective free agents until March 11. With all that being said, it should not come as a surprise to anyone that Foles will be heading to the Jaguars.

Throughout the early stages of this offseason, the free-agent signal caller was linked to the Jaguars often, despite other teams such as the New York Giants, Washington Redskins, Denver Broncos and Miami Dolphins possibly looking for new quarterbacks.

The Broncos had interest in Foles but ultimately decided to trade for former Baltimore Ravens quarterback Joe Flacco earlier last month. When it came to the Giants, Foles reportedly had a legitimate interest in Big Blue, but only if the New York moved on from Eli Manning.

On the other hand, the Redskins reportedly have their eyes on Arizona Cardinals second-year quarterback Josh Rosen, while the Dolphins reportedly were not interested in signing either Foles or Teddy Bridgewater in free agency.

Therefore, by process of elimination, the Jaguars look like the potential winner of the Foles' sweepstakes.

Last week, Eagles Executive Vice President of Football Operations Howie Roseman officially announced at the NFL scouting combine in Indianapolis, Indiana, that Foles would become a free agent.

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In C/O FSMC Contact
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A walk-through meeting is scheduled 3/8/19 at 2:00 pm at 7101 Paschall Ave. Philadelphia PA, 19142.

All proposals must be submitted no later than insert 2:00 pm due on 3/26/19. All proposals should be delivered in a sealed envelope and addressed to Southwest Leadership Academy Charter School and be clearly marked: Food Service Management Proposal.

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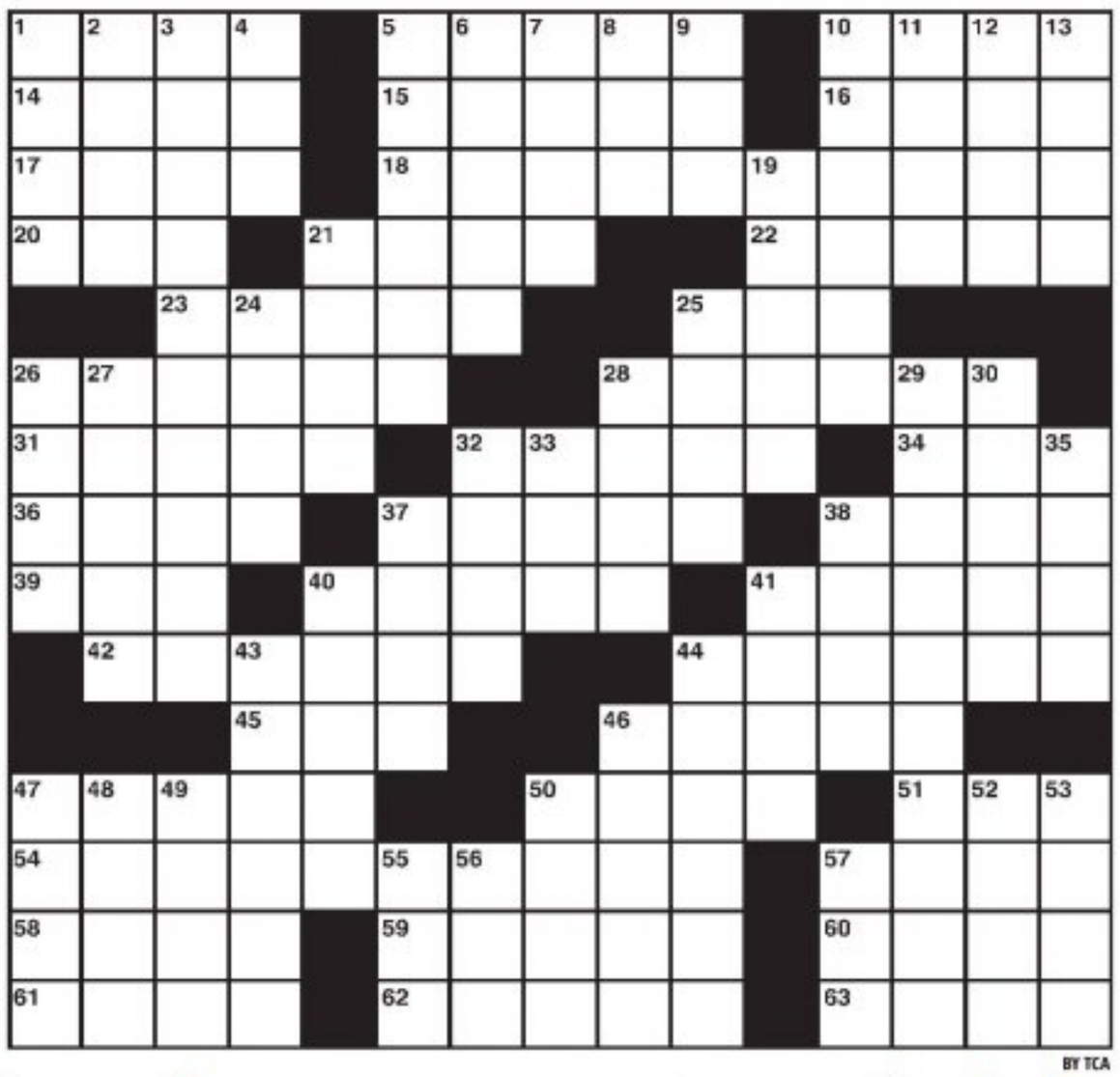
ACROSS

1 Guacamole & salsa
5 Granny Smith, for one
10 Flower stalk
14 Item on a bread tray
15 Dinah Washington's music
16 La __; sister of Michael Jackson
17 Blown __; astonished
18 College record-keepers
20 Tampa __ Buccaneers
21 Vats
22 Hell; underworld
23 Feel about blindly
25 __ alai
26 "Sesame __"
28 Human __; people
31 Wild felines
32 Entreaties
34 Leprechaun
36 Lie next to
37 Gather bit by bit
38 Polaris or Betelgeuse
39 Metal fastener
40 __ over; dwell on gloomily
41 Musical instrument
42 Thought the world of
44 Go by, as time
45 Seat for many
46 Peruvian pack animal
47 Neighbor of Nepal
50 __ up; absorb
51 ABC competitor
54 Indirect
57 WWII turning point
58 __-highs; long socks
59 Untrue
60 __ Benedict; fancy breakfast
61 Auctioneer's cry
62 Cornered
63 Expense

DOWN

1 Dull in color
2 Midwest U.S. state
3 School recess area
4 As __ as a fox
5 Sudden
6 West Point newcomer
7 Small wrinkly dogs
8 Wahine's accessory
9 Curvy letter
10 Overexert
11 Brown amphibian
12 Charlotte Brontë's "Jane __"
13 Church service
19 Bangkok folks
21 Corn sites
24 Landlord's collection
25 Harlow or Stapleton
26 Swat
27 Part of the leg
28 Rosary piece
29 Energy
30 Venetian blinds
32 Trudge
33 Tolstoy or Durocher
35 Complimentary
37 Got bigger
38 Close noisily
40 Bakery purchase
41 __ jacket; bulletproof vest
43 Gave one's views
44 In seventh heaven
46 Rotten person
47 Annoys
48 Forbidden subject
49 Sword fight
50 Part of a shoe
52 Sacks
53 Abnormal sac
55 Toward a ship's stern
56 Tavern
57 Last calendar pg.



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A	O	E	N	E	G	U	E	I	C
T	K	E	Q	K	G	G	A	R	Y
S	E	L	C	A	T	N	E	T	D
L	R	A	E	P	C	O	O	A	N
X	E	R	H	Z	P	H	N	P	A
V	D	R	A	W	D	I	U	Q	S
S	L	Y	T	S	U	R	K	M	W

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Tentacles

metro.us/wander

Category: Author

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R	H	E	A
E	I	T	N

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metro.us/sudoku

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8		2	9			3		
7	1	3				9	6	2
	8	7			4	1	2	9
	4		6		2		5	
1	2	5	8			6	4	
4	7	1				5	9	8
		8			1	2		6
2	3			9		4		

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Yesterday's Answers

S	I	F	T			A	B	C	S		B	L	O	B
O	G	R	E	S		W	O	O	L		L	A	V	A
M	O	U	N	T		A	N	T	I	D	O	T	E	S
E	R	S		A	L	I			M	E	T	E	R	S
		T	A	C	I	T			M	A	T			
S	T	R	I	K	E			P	I	L	O	T	S	
W	E	A	R	S		S	K	I	N	S		U	P	S
A	R	T	S		R	U	I	N	G		T	R	I	O
P	R	E		T	E	E	N	S		L	I	B	E	L
	A	D	O	R	E	S			C	A	R	U	S	O
			R	A	N			T	O	W	E	L		
A	G	H	A	S	T			R	O	Y		E	L	M
B	R	O	T	H	E	R	L	Y		E	R	N	I	E
L	A	N	E		R	U	E	S		R	A	C	E	D
E	Y	E	D		S	N	I	T			Y	E	N	S

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